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ABSTRACT

Designed to describe which strategies subjects use while making inferences, this instrument identifies 10 of these strategies: (1) rebinding, (2) questioning a default interpretation or a direct or indirect conflict, (3) shifting of focus, (4) analyzing alternatives, (5) assigning an alternate case, (6) confirming an immediate prior interpretation, (7) confirming a nonimmediate prior interpretation, (8) assuming a default interpretation and transforming information, (9) neglecting to respond or holding information, and (10) empathizing from experience. A reader is asked to read a passage up to a predetermined point at which an inference is to be made. The subject is then asked to tell what is happening within the text and what may happen next. The responses are then analyzed in terms of the strategies which are being used. Validity, reliability, and normative data are included. (This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2," published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. The TRIP review, included here as an introduction to the instrument, describes the instrument's category (reading), title, author, date, age range, (primary to postsecondary), purpose, and physical characteristics.) (JL)

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Categories of Inferencing Strategies.

The measurement instruments contained in this document have been reviewed in a monograph (cited below) edited by William T. Fagan, Charles Cooper, and Julie Jensen, for The Research Instruments Project (TRIP), and funded by a grant from the Trustees of the NCTE Research Foundation:

Measures for Research and Evaluation
in the
English Language Arts
Volume II

The purpose of the editors has been to select and review measurement instruments pertaining to all aspects of research and evaluation in the English language arts, e.g. language and language development, literacy, literature, reading (including comprehension, teacher-pupil interaction, etc.), writing, and teacher knowledge and attitudes. In order to make some of the actual instruments reviewed more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) has cooperated with the editors by processing selected instruments into the ERIC system (see the 42 documents assigned Clearinghouse accession numbers CS 207 904-945).

CS 207 942

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Category: Reading

Title: Categories of Inferencing Strategies

Author: Linda Phillips-Riggs

Age Range: Primary to post-secondary

Description of the Instrument:

Purpose: To describe which strategies subjects are using while making inferences.

Date of Construction: 1981

Physical Description: Ten inferencing strategies have been identified. These are:

1. Rebinding.
2. Questioning a default interpretation and/or a direct or indirect conflict.
3. Shifting of focus.
4. Analysing alternatives.
5. Assigning an alternate case.
6. Confirming an immediate prior interpretation.
7. Confirming a non immediate prior interpretation.
8. Assuming a default interpretation and transforming information.
9. Neglecting to respond or holding information.
10. Empathizing from experience.

A definition and example for Strategy 1: Rebinding, is given below:

Definition: When a reader suggests or hypothesizes a possible interpretation and then <u>immediately</u> realizes that this interpretation conflicts with previous information, he then substitutes another interpretation. In essence, the reader is rebinding the present information to a previous interpretation.

Example:
<u>Passage on Farming</u>
"They're using the auger to put the wheat into the graineries - no, not the graineries, but their bins."

<u>Passage on Going to the Rodeo</u>
In response to question "Why would Marty need glasses?"
"Marty has glasses and he forgot them at home - no, he lost them."

A reader is asked to read a passage up to a particular point at which an inference is to be made (predetermined by the examiner). The subject is then asked to tell what is happening and what may happen next. If necessary, probing questions are asked. The responses are then analysed in terms of the strategies which are being used.

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

A theory of reading within which one of the components was ENCOUNTER (Between Reader and Text) was established as a construct in which to specify the strategies used, that is, the nature of the encounter. Identification of the strategies was based on research by Collins et al (1977). Two pilot studies were conducted to streamline procedures and to isolate the strategies used. Agreement was necessary between the researcher and a colleague. Data from forty grade six readers were then analysed. A factor analysis indicated that all correlations were less than .20 and that the pattern of factor loadings clearly identified a single factor for each strategy. Each strategy was obviously independent of the other.

Interrater reliability between the researcher and a colleague on one-tenth of the protocols showed agreement of 93.4 per cent.

Data on the use of the strategies by forty grade six children, and the influence of specific variables are given in the reference.

Related Documents:

Collins, A., Brown, J.S. and Larkin, K. M. Inference on text understanding. Technical Report No. 40. Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1977. (ED 150 547)

Phillips-Riggs, Linda. The relationship between reading proficiency, background knowledge, and inferencing strategies. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1981.

INFERENCING STRATEGIES

Ten inferencing strategies were identified as being used by grade six students. Each strategy is defined below with examples from students' responses. The portion of the example that illustrates the strategy is in parenthesis.

Strategy 1 - Rebinding. When a reader suggests or hypothesizes a possible interpretation and then immediately realize that this interpretation conflicts with previous information, he then substitutes another interpretation. In essence the reader is "rebinding" the present information to a previous interpretation.

Example 1: Farming Passage

"They're using the auger to put it into the graineries (not the graineries but their bins)."

Example 2: Rodeo Passage

In response to the question "Why would Marty need glasses?"

"Marty had glasses and he forgot them at home (no he lost them)."

Example 3: Garden Party Passage

In response to the question "Were Mary Ellen and Theresa glad to see Bridie?"

"Yes, (No) because they were glad they left their camera at home."

Strategy 2 - Questioning a Default Interpretation and/or a Direct or Indirect Conflict. When the reader makes an initial interpretation of the input, this may trigger off a knowledge schema which the reader may or may not continue to maintain. However, the reader may have misinterpreted certain data and/or made incorrect assumptions based on the data available. When subsequent information is in conflict, rather than questioning the current information or choice (rebinding), the reader questions a previous interpretation and/or accompanying assumptions.

Example 1: Skiing Passage

"(I was wrong about they're going for a hike), they're going skiing because it says he waited in line for the chairlift."

"(Now I think it's not his first time), he's a pretty good skier."

Example 2: Fishing Passage

"They're fishermen (not sailors or lumberjacks) because it says here that the net was hard to pull."

Strategy 3 - Shifting of Focus. When the immediate question cannot be readily resolved, then the reader may address surrounding but related, though not the key questions. Frequently a response to such a question will constrain the response to the target question and a correct interpretaton will be more readily available.

Example 1: Randying Passage

"The kids are all on this hill playing and they're making trains but (what's a coaster?)"

Example 2: Skiing Passage

After reading Episode B, the student asks (What's a chalet?) and (Why would he be scared?)"

Example 3: Rodeo Passage

"I'm confused now cause why would he want to go either to a restaurant or picnic or something outside if he wanted to use glasses? (Unless they're field glasses?)"

Strategy 4 - Analysing Alternatives. The reader does not close in on any one interpretation of the data. Rather more than one possibility or alternative is raised and tentatively held until more information is available. Tentative words such as, "probably", "maybe", "or", "might", "I think", are often used with this strategy.

Example 1: Garden Party Passage

"They're going (to church or on a trip) to visit their aunt because they're putting on their best clothes."

Example 2: Skiing Passage

"That he was (probably skiing, maybe tobogganing)."

(Maybe he's going to do something) (or learn some lesson) (or something he's never done before)."

Example 3: Fishing Passage

"(They might sell the fish) (or they could unload) them and put them in a freezer, and go out again."

Strategy 5 - Assigning an Alternate Case. When information cannot be interpreted to fit within existing data, and when subsequent information does not provide a solution, then an alternate interpretation is given this information and this interpretation is held in abeyance from other information as a separate thread or strand. It seems as if the reader is dichotomizing his initial schema.

Example 1: Rodeo Passage.

The student having already talked about going on a picnic or to a party wonders about the glasses. The student then says "He was going to a masquerade party and he wanted to wear glasses (maybe they were the glasses with the big nose and moustache)."

Example 2: Randying Passage.

The student having just read about the new coaster responds to the question "Why did he have to try out his new coaster? ("It's the day after Christmas and there's just a few days left before school starts up again so he wants to try out his new coaster while he has the chance)."

Strategy 6 - Confirming an Immediate Prior Interpretation. The reader interprets a subsequent response so that it is consistent with the response immediately preceding.

Example 1: Skiing Passage

"They were skiing (because of the word slope), (I thought about winter and skiing)."

Example 2: Fishing Passage

"They were going fishing (because of the word bay)."

Example 3: Garden Party Passage

"They're going to a wedding or something special (because they're putting on their best clothes)."

Strategy 7 - Confirming a Non-Immediate Prior Interpretation. Having made a particular interpretation, the reader then considers alternate interpretations but on the basis of subsequent information reverts to the earlier interpretation, confirming this interpretation as his choice.

Example 1: Skiing Passage

The student previously thought that Marty was going skiing for the first time, then after exposure to another episode of the passage, she states ("Now I know he's going skiing probably for the first time)."

Example 2: Garden Party Passage.

The student having already thought that snaps were pictures confirms after exposure to the word camera ("Now I'm sure snaps are pictures)."

Example 3: Rodeo Passage

The student already surmised that Marty might be going to a fair or rodeo but later constrains his thoughts and confirms ("It's a rodeo, I know it's a rodeo now cause of the calf roping, steer wrestling and bronc riding)."

Strategy 8 - Assuming a Default Interpretation and Transforming Information

The reader makes a particular assumption based on incorrect knowledge. That is, the reader may lack prior knowledge associations for the data presented or he misconstrues new data presented in an attempt to confirm a previous interpretation in spite of inconsistencies.

Example 1: Fishing Passage

(They're going to the bay to go shopping.) In response to the question "Why did they tie up to the wharf?" the student says ("So they wouldn't lose their fish)."

Example 2: Farming Passage

("A hopper is a machine that cuts grain)."

Example 3: Randying Passage

"Maybe after the fastest run he'll go home." The text then says nothing about his going home, however after the student reads it she says ("He walked home and was glad he was safe)."

Strategy 9 - Neglecting to Respond or Holding Information. The reader has no interpretation of the information available, which is signified by silence, the expressions, "I don't know", "no", or the reader makes an interpretation and rephrases this same interpretation in two or more variations without the addition of any new information.

Example 1: Farming Passage

In response to the question "Why did he tie the tarp over the grain box?" the student responds "I don't know."

Oftentimes questions were asked and no response was given. This strategy was utilized on all six passages.

Example 2: Rodeo Passage

Other students chose to reiterate a previous interpretation.

"He's getting up in the morning and like he's looking for his favorite jeans, (well he's looking for his jeans) and then his dad shouted he was about to leave, (like if you want to come, come now) (because I'm leaving,) (so if you want to come, come now)."

Strategy 10 - Empathizing from Experience. The reader on the basis of the data and his own personal experiences projects himself into the actual situation and experiences another's condition or state which becomes a part of his interpretation.

Example 1: Rodeo Passage

"They are at a rodeo and (I don't want the cows to get hurt because I don't like calf roping)."

Example 2: Skiing Passage

"He's scared because it's his first time skiing, (I was sure scared the first time I went)."

In response to the question "Do you think that he felt good that he didn't crash into the lineup" Why? the student responded "Yeah, I don't know because like ah, (if he did, like Oh God, Help me, like this is all my new stuff and I don't want to bend any of it or something and like he could have hurt somebody else and it wouldn't make a good run down the hill, like because he would have gone down the hill perfectly and then he comes crashing into the people in the lineup and then like they'd say 'Hey, get out of here, what are you doing?' and he'd just feel stupid)."